

POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Coming to Engknd in 1792 on the pretext of a mission and thereby escaping the odium of being an Emigre, he confesses that he was glad to be *out* of France during the Terror and to see the working of British and American institutions.

Talleyrand's enduring fame was won during his ten years as Foreign Minister under the Directory and Napoleon/ He liked the young General, whom he regarded as die best man to restore national discipline, and discussed with him plans for Brumaire. The First Consul, we are told, began to degenerate after the Peace of Amiens in 1802, became drunk with power, and committed one costly mistake after another. "He attacked Spain without the slightest excuse, and he lost sight of the interests of France/' Talleyrand compared it to cheating at cards, which, as he reminded the Emperor, is never forgotten nor forgiven. This, he declares, was the cause of his resignation. The "odious conduct" of the ruler in his conflict with the Papacy is censured all the more harshly since the Foreign Minister had welcomed the Concordat as a master-stroke. The gathering of the Kings and Princes at Erfurt in 1808 is the most vivid and attractive portion of the whole work, for the author as Grand Chamberlain was at the centre of events. We watch Talma on the stage, and listen to Napoleon's conversations with Goethe and Wieknd.

Though the Emperor came to dislike and distrust Talleyrand, he invited him to return to the Foreign Office in 1813. The offer was declined, for the cleverest of men knew that his old master was doomed. For the full story of the Congress of Vienna, his finest hour, we have to content ourselves with his despatches to the Foreign Minister and his private correspondence with Louis XVin. The brief

summary which
serves as an Introduction breathes a deep but
quiet satisfaction
at his skill and success. France was accepted as
an equal and
Saxony was saved from incorporation in Prussia.
In fighting
for the two principles of legitimacy and balance
of power,
he forfeited the friendship of Alexander, the most
difficult
member of the Vienna team. The story of the
greatest period
of his life ends with his brief Ministry under
Louis XV3H.
From 1815 to 1830 there is a blank, but when the
July Revolution
brought Louis Philippe to the throne, the
old statesman
consented to represent the new regime in
England. He
returned to Paris in 1834 at the age of 80, and
died in 1838.
None of his contemporaries except Metternich
could look
back on such a long and eventful career.